

Natural Bridges State Beach



OUR MISSION

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

GRAY DAVIS
Governor

MARY D. NICHOLS
Secretary for Resources

RUTH COLEMAN
Acting Director, California State Parks



California State Parks does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at the phone number below. To receive this publication in an alternate format, write to the Communications Office at the following address.

CALIFORNIA	For information call:
STATE PARKS	800-777-0369
P. O. Box 942896	916-653-6995, outside the U.S.
Sacramento, CA	711, TTY Relay Service
94296-0001	

www.parks.ca.gov

Natural Bridges State Beach
2531 West Cliff Drive
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(831) 423-4609

Photography by California State Parks and John L. Goldberg

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atural Bridges State Beach is a magnificent oasis of natural beauty located between the edge of the ocean and the outer limits of the city of Santa Cruz. During fall and winter, Natural Bridges is home to one of the largest monarch butterfly over-wintering sites in the Western United States. Thousands of monarch butterflies clustering in the eucalyptus trees can be seen from the boardwalk in the Monarch Preserve. A demonstration milkweed patch next to the visitor center provides food for monarch caterpillars. If you look closely, you can find the bright green chrysalids (cocoons) hanging under the fence railing in the spring and fall. Monarch tours are offered on the weekends during the winter.

Spring brings warmer weather and low tides for viewing anemones, crabs, urchins, sea stars and other sea life. Check the visitor center or local tide charts for the guided tide pool tours that take place year-round. Moore Creek Trail passes through coastal scrub, riparian, fresh water marsh and dunes ending in a seasonal lagoon at the ocean. Summer offers opportunities to sunbathe, swim, surf, sailboard and enjoy the beauty of this special park. The beach is an excellent vantage point for viewing the famous Natural Bridge, as well as shore birds, migrating whales, seals and sea otters.

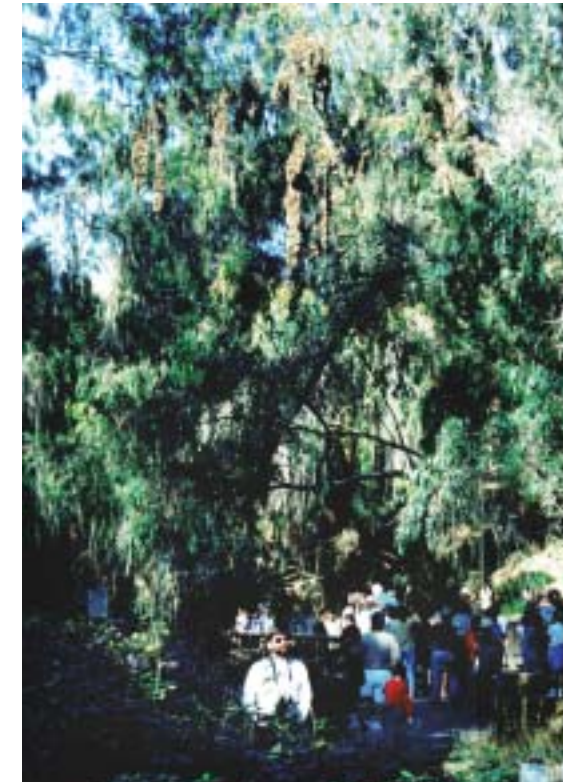


Clustering monarchs

clustering by the thousands, intertwining their legs among the branches, initially resembling a clump of leaves. Upon closer inspection one can detect delicate, gossamer wings—comprised of orange with a tan underside—and see that these creatures are clustering to save their lives and to avoid being dislodged from their companions by the wind and rain.

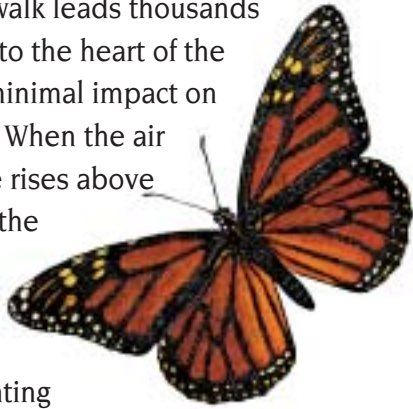
THE MONARCH PRESERVE

In 1983 California State Parks established the monarch grove as a natural preserve so that future generations of monarchs—as well as people—may find sanctuary here. As the days begin to grow shorter following the fall equinox, monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexipus*) throughout the western United States begin a wondrous and daring journey of up to 2,000 miles to seek sanctuary from winter's cold. The eucalyptus grove at Natural Bridges State Beach is one of many groves monarchs travel to along the California and northern Baja coastline. Here they find ideal conditions—a temperate climate, shelter from the wind, and sources of food and water. During the cool fall and winter days and evenings, monarchs can be seen



Visitors walking through the eucalyptus grove

A wheelchair- and stroller-accessible boardwalk leads thousands of visitors into the heart of the grove with minimal impact on the habitat. When the air temperature rises above 55 degrees, the butterflies may burst from their clusters, floating through the trees and into the surrounding area in search of flower nectar and water. Near the end of winter, the grove becomes active with the monarchs mating and leaving for locations inland in search of native milkweed plants



on which the female butterflies will lay their eggs.

TIDE POOLS—LIFE ON THE EDGE

Life is most often thought of as occurring on the land or in the water. In the tide pools, where plants and animals live within the nexus of land and sea, extreme conditions are the rule of daily life. Forces of gravity—created by the interplay of the earth, moon and sun—are what cause the tides. Twice each day the tide uncovers pools of all sizes teeming with sea stars, hermit crabs, urchins, kelp and many more species. Survival in this

habitat requires adapting to rapid changes in temperature, water salinity, pounding surf and human activity. On your adventure to the tidepools, please leave all plants and animals attached to the rocks. Prying them off may harm or kill them.

FOOTPRINTS ON THE LAND

The Natural Bridges State Beach land area



Giant green sea anemone

has changed ownership many times over the course of history. The first people to inhabit this area were small groups of Ohlone Indians, who spanned the region from San Francisco Bay to Monterey Bay. Spanish settlers later occupied the land. When they brought the Ohlone people into the mission system, the native population was nearly decimated by European diseases to which they had no resistance. By 1834 this area was under the newly independent Mexican authority, and Mexican citizens used it for cattle grazing. After the Mexican-American War, California became a territory of the United States. In subsequent years the land supported the Hall dairy, a hotel, a brussels sprouts farm, housing for workers at the



Carefully examining life in the tidepools

nearby Antonelli Mill Pond, a South Seas movie set and an uncompleted housing development. The State of California purchased the land in 1933, and in 1954 facility construction began. Until the 1970s open space surrounded the park. Over the years development has increased tenfold, making the park a diamond in the rough among its urban neighbors.

NATURAL BRIDGES, OR FALLEN ARCHES?

In the early 1900s, the three arches carved by nature out of a mudstone cliff inspired the naming of Natural Bridges. Wave action against the soft rock formed the bridges and also undercut them, eventually eroding away and leaving only islands. The outermost arch fell in the early part of the 20th century, and the inner arch broke during a storm in 1980. Only the middle arch remains, and it is slowly being eroded by the waves. The health of the park's natural resources is at the mercy of the many visitors who come to this special place each year. Historically, families drove horse and buggies onto the three arches, where they enjoyed picnics. Today the last remaining arch is a fragile and unique treasure. Do not climb on the arch; view it from a distance and appreciate its



The last remaining arch at Natural Bridges State Beach

exquisite beauty. Keep the park a vital habitat for the great variety of wildlife that makes Natural Bridges its home—walk gently and remove nothing.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Natural Bridges State Beach is a haven for the outdoor enthusiast. Its small, sheltered pocket beach is a favorite place for families

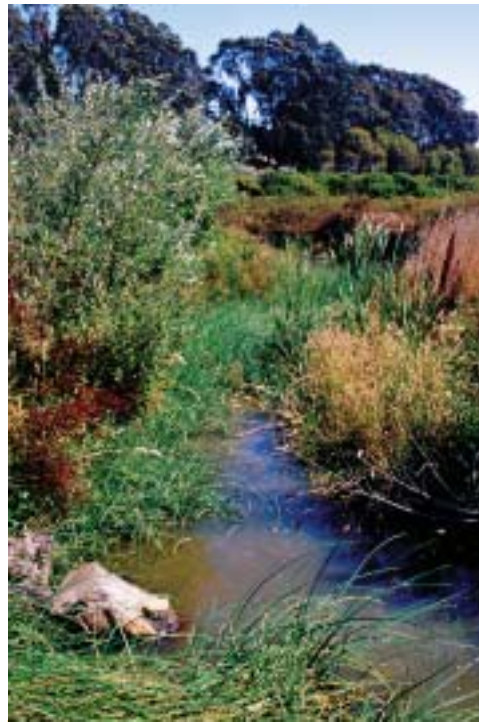
to relax and play in the sand, enjoy the sun and comb the beach. Frequent afternoon winds welcome sailboarders for an exhilarating afternoon on the bay, while kites can often be flown from the shore. Large winter swells are popular with the experienced surfer and boogie boarders. More than a mile of trails offers hikers an opportunity to stroll through the Monarch Butterfly Nature Preserve and the Moore Creek estuary. Nature lovers can participate in a guided walk with a park naturalist. Runners and bicyclists frequent the park's main road. For those just wanting to enjoy a quiet picnic with the family, there are numerous picnic tables and barbecue stoves in the picnic area. The sun setting over the bay offers a spectacular ending to a wonderful day. Bring your family to Natural Bridges State Beach for a day of stimulating outdoor entertainment.



White pelican



Dune plants



Moore Creek

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Natural Bridges offers a variety of educational experiences throughout the year. Inquire at the visitor center for dates and times.

Monarch Butterfly Tours

11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on weekends during fall and winter. Meet at the visitor center to learn about monarch butterflies and their miraculous life cycle.

Tide Pool Explorations

Offered throughout the year during times of low tide.

Guided Nature Walks

Offered year-round. Topics vary and may include bird walks, wetland explorations, and more.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Welcome Back Monarchs Day

From 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on the second Sunday in October, welcome the monarch butterflies back to Natural Bridges with music, food, games, guided walks and the annual appearance of Monarch Man and Monarch Woman.

The Migration Festival

From 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on the second Saturday in February, learn about the

fascinating journey of the many animals that migrate to and through Natural Bridges and the surrounding area. Educational booths, guided walks, entertainment, games and more make for a day of fun and discovery.

In addition to the activities listed above, organized groups of ten or more may schedule a guided walk by calling (831) 423-4609.

NEARBY STATE PARKS

Wilder Ranch State Park

2 miles north of the Santa Cruz city limits
(831) 423-9703/429-2850

Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park

5 miles north of Santa Cruz on Highway 9
(831) 335-4598

Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park

Downtown Santa Cruz on School Street
(831) 425-5849

The Forest of Nisene Marks State Park

6 miles down the coast from Santa Cruz on Aptos Creek Road.
(831) 763-7062

Twin Lakes State Beach

At the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor
(831) 429-2850

Lighthouse Field State Beach

Operated by the City of Santa Cruz
(831) 420-5270

New Brighton State Beach

4 miles south of Santa Cruz on Highway 1
(831) 429-2850

Seacliff State Beach

5 1/2 miles south of Santa Cruz on Highway 1
(831) 685-6500/429-2850

PLEASE REMEMBER

- Natural Bridges State Beach is open year-round from 8:00 a.m. to sunset.
- Surf Safety—Enter tide pools only during periods of low tides. Often there is no lifeguard on duty, and the surf can be unpredictable, with hazardous rip currents and large waves that can appear out of nowhere and sweep the unsuspecting visitor out to sea. The beach and tide pools are known for their incredible beauty, but they can also be extremely dangerous. Do not run on the wet rocks of the intertidal area, and never turn your back to the waves. Check with the lifeguard or at the park entrance or visitor center before entering the ocean and the tidepool areas.
- Collecting is prohibited—Do not disturb the butterfly clusters in any way. The park's natural wonders are protected by law. Leave them in place for everyone to enjoy.
- Stay on designated trails to protect the plants, prevent erosion and to avoid poison oak and stinging nettle.
- Dogs are not allowed on the beach, on trails or in the grove. Dogs are allowed on leash in the parking lots and picnic areas only.
- Bicycles are permitted only on paved roads.
- Fires and glass containers are not allowed on the beach.
- Alcoholic beverages are not allowed in the park unless a special event permit is obtained through the California State Parks Santa Cruz District Office, (831) 429-2857.
- Smoking, biking, roller skating and skateboarding are not permitted in the grove.
- Speak quietly while you and others enjoy this natural wonder.



www.santacruzstateparks.org

Docent Training Classes

Volunteer docents conduct guided walks, host the visitor center and assist with special events. Contact the visitor center to apply for the next docent training class.

Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks

This dedicated volunteer organization provides a vital link between Natural Bridges and the community by funding

school and visitor programs, special events and interpretive exhibits and publications. To find out more, or to become a member, visit the Friends Web site at www.scparkfriends.org or call (831) 429-1840.



ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

- The boardwalk into the eucalyptus grove (The lower portion is level, and there are numerous rest stops along the way.)
- Two picnic tables, one adjacent to accessible parking
- Visitor center, including the restrooms, interactive and interpretive displays, videos
- Beach viewing platform adjacent to the overflow parking lot and entrance station